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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 JEDDAH 000646

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SUBJECT: MOSQUE SERMONS FOR SAUDI ARABIA SEPTEMBER 15:
MECCA, MEDINA, AL-KHOBAR

Classified By: Acting Consul General CB Toney,
for reasons 1.4 (c) and (d)

MECCA: PRAISE COULD LEAD TO CONCEIT

¶1. (C) Shaykh Saud Ibn-Ibrahim al-Shuraym delivered the sermon at the Grand Mosque in Mecca on September 15. The sermon focused on the idea that Muslims should give sincere advice. The imam said, "One meets three types of people; a type that praises him, a type that criticizes him, and a type that advises him. The best of these three is the last." The imam warned, however, that praise is a serious weapon since it may drive the praised individual to conceit and the praising one to hypocrisy. The imam continued that the potential pitfalls of one who receives much praise is that, "His heart pulsates only when he is praised. He only breathes with praise. And, he only accompanies those who praise him. He has no room for elders to consult with." (Comment: This seems to be a warning to all those in positions of authority to avoid arrogance and to always remain humble enough to take criticism, correction, and advice. End Comment.)

¶2. (C) The imam outlined how a person criticizes out of malice, adding that such people are "a scourge on their societies and evil." Quoting the prophet he said, "The most evil among those who have a lower rank on the Day of Judgment is the one who has been abandoned by people to avoid his obscene language." The imam concluded with a prayer for the prophet, his four caliphs, family members, and companions. He prayed, "O Allah, support Islam and Muslims, humble non-belief and unbelievers. O Allah, support your religion, book, the sunnah of your prophet, and your faithful subjects."

MEDINA: CALL TO ALMSGIVING

¶3. (C) The sermon at the mosque in Medina was delivered by Shaykh Ali Ibn-Abd-al-Rahman al-Hudhayfi. The imam spoke of the religious duty of almsgiving and called on Muslims to perform this duty so as to be rewarded by Allah. He said, "Almsgiving is akin to praying. A subject,s praying is not accepted until he performs almsgiving." The imam hailed the

month of Ramadan and urged Muslims to welcome it with joy and worship to Allah.

AL-KHOBAR: PRAY FOR ALLEVIATION OF HUMAN SUFFERING

¶4. (C) The sermon at the Imam Ahmad bin Hanbal Mosque was not delivered by the usual imam, Shaykh al-Qahtani, who is currently on his annual vacation. (Note: Shaykh al-Qahtani, or the "political imam" as he is known by some, usually returns from his annual vacation with the start of the Saudi school year. It is currently unknown why his leave has been extended. End Note.) The imam who gave the sermon is believed to be a judge assigned to the Shari'a Court in al-Khobar. His name is unknown. The imam spoke of a change in human nature that has affected interpersonal and international relations. He said that people have become meaner and more willing to commit acts of evil, murder, and other sins for the sake of worldly gains. The imam explained that mayhem and human suffering in the world is an indication of God's displeasure.

¶5. (C) The imam called for others to join him in prayer for salvation. He said that for the Creator to help, humanity must first show that it is worthy of help, by helping itself. "We have to do what is in our powers to alleviate human suffering. We have to work against hatred and to bridge human misunderstandings." (Comment: The imam's message of the importance of alleviating human suffering and bridging misunderstandings is very positive. It will be interesting to see whether al-Qahtani, upon his return, will continue with this sort of message or abandon it for a more political message. According to our contact, al-Qahtani is known for

JEDDAH 00000646 002 OF 002

delivering particularly anti-American political sermons. End Comment.)

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